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A guide for
*home day care
providers*

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A guide for *home day care providers*



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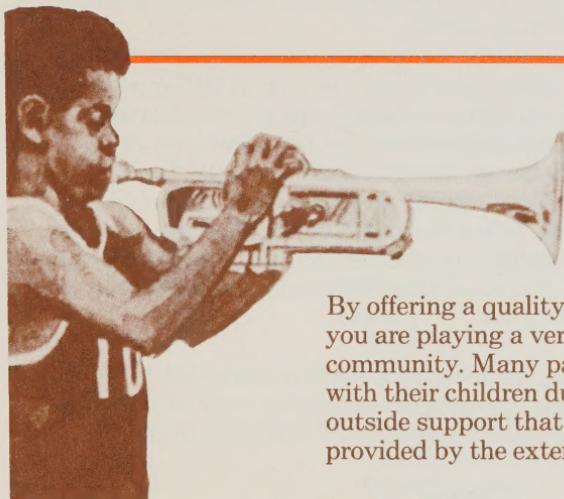
To the reader

You may already be a day care provider, or you may be deciding whether to become one. The purpose of this handbook is to give you information on all aspects of providing day care in your own home.

A guide for home day care providers is a reference book. As such, it is not intended to be read straight through from cover to cover, but kept handy for use when needed. A detailed list of the topics presented is included in the Contents pages, so that you can find the information you need as quickly as possible.

Providing day care for a child demands a substantial investment of time and effort, knowledge and carefulness. The practical information in this handbook is intended to assist you, the care giver, in making sure that the children in your care have a safe and healthy environment in which to grow. It may also help you to ensure a challenging and comfortable experience for the child, an experience that will encourage him to develop in the best possible way during his formative and impressionable early years.

Introduction



By offering a quality day care service in your home, you are playing a very important role in your community. Many parents are unable to be at home with their children during the day and must turn to outside support that once was almost exclusively provided by the extended family.

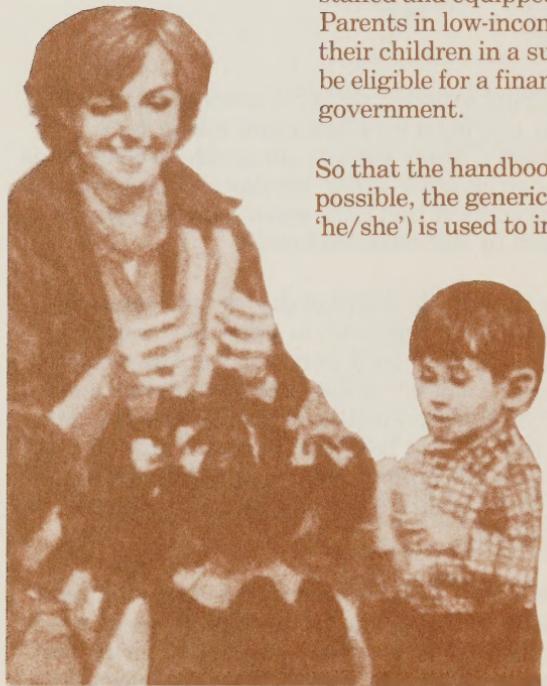
By far the largest source of day care in Ontario is the informal arrangement in which five or fewer children are cared for in non-licensed non-regulated settings. (An informal day care setting with more than five children must be licensed under the *Day Nurseries Act*.) In fact, it is estimated that 80 to 85 per cent of all children in day care in Ontario are cared for by relatives, friends and neighbours in their homes.

The type of day care offered by a neighbour, friend or relative in their home can provide an environment much like that in the child's own home. There has been some significant research into the informal day care system. These studies have provided information on this type of care, including an indication of the needs of the people providing it and the parents and children using it.

In Ontario, day care centres offer supervised programs for groups of six or more: children aged 10 and under, and handicapped children aged 2-18 years. These programs may be offered on a full-time or part-time basis. Private home day care agencies provide programs for up to five children in supervised private homes. The support services offered by the umbrella agency may include the following: orientation and in-service training for providers, toy and equipment loans, suggested activities, the matching of children to homes, and an ongoing monitoring service.

Both group centre care and supervised private home care must adhere to the standards and regulations of the Ontario *Day Nurseries Act*, which ensures that the setting is safe, healthy, and staffed and equipped to meet the children's needs. Parents in low-income families who choose to place their children in a supervised day care setting may be eligible for a financial subsidy from the provincial government.

So that the handbook reads as smoothly as possible, the generic 'he' (rather than 'he or she' or 'he/she') is used to indicate both the sexes.



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Caring for other people's children

There are many reasons why people may decide to offer child care in their home. They may want to supplement the family income without having to work outside the home, to provide playmates for their own children, to help out friends or neighbours by looking after their child or simply to enjoy the company of children.

Whatever the reason, informal day care could provide a comfortable experience for small numbers of children. Brothers and sisters can stay together in a family-like setting. Neighbourhood informal day care that offers carefully thought out learning activities may be the answer for many families.

If you are thinking about providing day care in your home, there are a number of considerations that should help you decide whether or not you want to accept this responsibility.

How will providing day care affect you and your family?

- Do you truly enjoy working with children?
- Do you think you know enough about the needs of children to offer them the security, protection and learning experiences they must have to thrive?
- How many children (not more than five) do you feel you can care for and supervise well?

- What age group, or combination of age groups, do you feel most comfortable with?
- Are you willing to commit long hours to the care of children each day?
- What would be the length of the day care day in your home? Take into consideration that some parents may ask to bring their child to you early, on their way to work; some may not be able to collect their child until after six o'clock.
- Are you willing to make a reasonably long-term commitment to the children in your care, recognizing that it may be upsetting for a child if care givers change frequently?
- Are you capable of adjusting to a variety of situations and coping with emergencies and accidents calmly and efficiently?
- Do you enjoy good health and a generous helping of patience and warmth?
- Can you appreciate, accept and feel comfortable with a child's culture, customs and language if they are different from your own?
- Are you able to treat each child as an individual and adapt your program to meet his needs and preferences?
- How will you encourage frequent and continuous opportunities for parents to be involved in your care of their children?
- How will your neighbours react to an increased number of children and the sounds of children playing outside?

The decision to accept children into your home will affect all the members of your family. Understanding all the possible impacts on your family, together with an explanation to each one of them about what to expect will assist you in organizing your service better.



- Will the other members of your family react to the presence of children in your home and to the time spent with them?
- Could a family member who is on shift work, who is ill, convalescing or elderly still rest during the day?
- How will your family react to possible delays in the evening meal or other household tasks and to an increase in the number of telephone calls?
- If you have teenage children, will they find it difficult to study or have friends over?

Your own children may be concerned about sharing your attention and their toys and possibly having the privacy of their bedrooms invaded.

Allaying their fears will require a special effort. You might consider: allowing them to decide beforehand which toys and treasures they are willing to share and which they want to put away; respecting their wishes not to share a special possession; gently suggesting to a child who decides to put away all his toys that a few remain out; and giving them the responsibility of introducing the new children to their home.

Physical space suggestions

Before opening your home to day care children, you should consider which areas they will use, the wear and tear they will cause, and how they will affect the present use of that space.

Children need a safe, clean environment, where they can reach most toys and play materials by themselves, and where they feel part of the mainstream of activity in the home. You may adapt a centrally located area as a play area for them or designate different areas for different play activities.

- Is your home physically set up to accommodate young children?

- Is there a quiet area where a child can play alone?
- Is there an open space where they can sit comfortably to eat meals and snacks?
- Is there a convenient washroom?
- Is there a place to nap or rest quietly?
- Are there indoor and outdoor storage places for toys and equipment?
- Is there an accessible and safe outdoor play space?
- Is there a place where a child can be isolated and supervised if he is ill?
- Is there adequate daylight or artificial light in the rooms children occupy?
- If you are considering day care for babies, would you be able to take the extra precautions needed to set up your home? (See the chapter on Safety.)

A back-up person

Your plans should include making arrangements with a back-up person. This friend or neighbour (or member of your family) should be free to come to your home immediately when asked, to care for the children in an emergency such as your sudden illness, or if you had to drive a child to hospital.

Providing day care in your home is similar to operating a small business. Careful planning will protect you and your family from unnecessary expenses or liability and help ensure a successful service.

Insurance coverage

While the children are in your care, their protection and safety is your responsibility. Ordinary household insurance policies may not cover accidents involving

them in your house, yard, car, or on outings. To cover all possible circumstances, you can obtain comprehensive liability insurance for your property and liability coverage for your car. Ask your insurance broker.

Zoning

Local, regional or municipal by-laws may have specific zoning, fire-prevention requirements or other restrictions affecting homes which provide day care. You should check with your local municipal office to ensure compliance with these by-laws.

Budget

Providing day care in your home will involve certain ongoing expenses. You may save money by planning ahead, watching for sales, comparing prices, buying in bulk, and contacting local businesses for free samples. You should also consider a number of other expenses.

Food

- Estimate the number of meals and snacks you will have to provide, based on how many hours a day the children are in your home.

Toys

- A variety of improvised play materials should be used, but some money will probably be necessary for the purchase and replacement of toys, books and records.

Art supplies

- It may also be necessary to buy such craft materials as paper, crayons, scissors with rounded (not pointed) ends, glue and paint.

Personal hygiene Supplies

- You may have to budget extra money for paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, laundry soap, disposable diapers and first-aid items.

Transportation

- There will be the additional cost of operating your car if you have to use it to transport the children to and from school or for other local trips; as well as the cost of installing seat-belts, if not equipped.

Miscellaneous

- Remember to allow for materials, supplies and decorations for special events, holidays, picnics and birthday celebrations.

Further training

- And, finally, include the cost of registration, books, and transportation if you decide to take training courses in first aid, child care or related subjects.

Income tax and and record keeping

If you are providing day care in your home, Revenue Canada considers you self-employed and you must file an income tax claim. Depending on the amount of income you earn, your spouse may still be able to claim a full married exemption or a portion of it for you. Check with your local District Taxation Office regarding the current dollar figure for exemptions.

Every person operating a business is required by law to keep records for tax purposes. Keeping a file of your income and expenses will also help you complete your income tax form and will indicate whether you are charging parents enough to cover your day care costs and time. You should give parents receipts, so that they can claim the child-care tax credit on their income tax returns.

Your income is simply the amount of money you receive from parents for caring for their children. Your expenses are the costs you incur in providing this care; these must be supported by receipts. Deductible expenses may include food, play supplies and materials, equipment, additional insurance coverage, long-distance telephone calls or stationery and postage related to your day care service, transportation of the day care children, training sessions, and such household items as paper goods and first-aid supplies that are used for day care. A percentage of such household expenses as rent and utilities may also be deductible.

Remember, Revenue Canada requires proof that your claims for business costs and expenses are legitimate. It is your responsibility to provide that proof. The Taxation Department may not allow any unsupported costs and expenses. Contact your local District Taxation Office for more information.



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The day care giver and the parents: a partnership

A big part of your ability to offer a successful day care service will depend upon the partnership you establish with the parents to ensure the health and well-being of the children in your care ...

Whether you advertise your service or are responding to a parent-initiated contact, you will have to be well prepared for a business negotiation. If initial contact is made by telephone, this is the time for you to explain the basic service you provide and your general expectations of the parent.

These are some of the matters to discuss.

- available vacancy (opening) for the child
- location
- hours of care
- holidays observed
- ages and number of other children in care
- pets on the premises
- cost
- caregiver's experience

The interview

After the parents have given you some information about their child and the care he needs, your next step will be to agree to a convenient interview time. Whether you have known the family for a long time or they are complete strangers, your first meeting with them is an important one. Arrange to meet the parents and the child in your home. At that time you could interview each other to establish clearly all aspects of your partnership and reach agreement on these.

Typical questions from parents

The parents may ask you a number of questions.

- How long have you been providing day care? Do you plan to offer this service on a long-term basis?
- Will other adults be present during the day?
- Will additional children be in your care during the noon hour or after school?
- What activities are you prepared to offer during the day?
- What are your feelings about children watching television?
- What type of meals will you serve? Will there be a morning and an afternoon snack in addition to lunch?
- What rules or limits do you set for the children in your care?
- How would you deal with a child who is misbehaving?

Detailed discussions around the actual operating procedures of your service may include questions like these.

- Will the fee be the same if parents have more than one child in your care?
- How and when will parents pay you?
- Will you issue a receipt?
- Will parents have to pay you if their child is absent because of illness, holidays or emergencies?
- What are the arrival and departure times?
- Will there be an extra charge for late pick-up or for care offered on holidays or weekends or at unusual times?
- Who will care for their child if you are unable to because of illness, vacation or emergencies?
- How will you deal with holidays— theirs and yours?
- What is your policy regarding a child who is ill or convalescing?
- Will there be a mutual trial period to see whether you and the parents are satisfied with the day care arrangement for the child?
- How much notice and pay would you want to give or be given before an agreement is ended?
- What activities and routines will you provide for their child?
- What precautions will you take to ensure the child's safety? Have you developed an emergency evacuation plan in case of fire or accidents?
- What procedures would you follow in an emergency?
- Do you have letters of reference for parents to see?



During this interview, you should ask the parents for more detailed information about their child.

- What is the child's state of health?
- What is the child's immunization record?
- Are there any special health considerations you should know about, such as special diet, allergies, sleeping and eating patterns?
- What is the child's home life like? For example, what are his food preferences, favourite activities, toys and other likes and dislikes?
- How much television do parents allow?
- What limits are enforced on the child's behaviour at home?
- Where does the child go to school? What are his study habits? Will you be expected to escort him to and from school?
- How much supervision does the school-age child require? Will he be allowed to play at the homes of friends after school?
- Has the child been in day care before now? What kind of day care? Did he enjoy the experience?

The parents should have other specific information to give you during the day care interview.

- What items will they supply, if any? (For example: food, formula, bottles, diapers, change of clothing, toothbrush, toys, infant furniture or equipment.)
- What are their home and work addresses and telephone numbers?
- Can they give you the telephone number of a reliable neighbour?

- What is the name and telephone number of their child's doctor?
- What is their OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan) or other health insurance number?
- What arrangements do they prefer for outings and special events?
- How and when will they inform you if the child will be absent?
- What are the names and telephone numbers of other people who may be picking up their child?
- When the day care arrangement begins, will they give you written permission to obtain emergency treatment for their child, if required?
- Will they give you written instructions for giving medicine or special foods, if required?
- How will they take part in the child's day care experience?

Showing parents your home

In order to give parents a more complete idea of your day care service, they should be shown through your home. This will let them see the physical set-up of where you live and reassure them that there is plenty of space for children to play and rest. The safety features you have arranged should also be discussed (see the chapter on Safety).

Their visit allows the parents and the child to see your day care service in operation. Observing other children busily involved in an activity gives the new child a chance to see what the day care experience will be like. It also gives you and the parents an opportunity to see how the child responds.

Reaching the decision to place a child in your care

The decision to place a child in day care is often a difficult one for parents. The day care provider becomes an invaluable support by making the transition into her home as smooth as possible. As with any business, you must assure consumers that your service is of high quality and that you will work hard to provide good care for their child. Your ability to be open and honest will give the parent a firmer basis upon which to make a decision about your day care service. This will also help the parents prepare their child for care by another person; they can tell the child about you and what to expect in your home. However, the child will still need your utmost help to feel secure in this new setting.

Once you and the parents have agreed that the child will come to your home for day care, it is important that you confirm all details of the arrangement in writing.

Maintaining the partnership

Ongoing communication between you and the parents, along with your mutual respect and support for their child, will form the foundation of a successful day care arrangement. You should arrange a regular time to discuss the child's growth and development and to discuss how the child is doing. (You might wish to prepare written notes and questions ahead of time.) Remember to say something positive about the child and his experiences in your home and to inform the parents of any concerns you may have.

A relationship of mutual respect and trust between care giver and parents takes time to develop. If a serious disagreement arises, arrange to meet without the child present to discuss each other's feelings; make sure the point of the meeting is not lost; discuss your differences calmly and one at a time; explain clearly what you believe should be done and allow the parent to do the same; then if possible seek a compromise.

Meeting the needs of the child in day care

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Meeting the needs of the child in day care

Helping the child adjust to a separation from his normal environment and the adults who are important to him may be the first hurdle you encounter as a care giver. There are several ways of encouraging him to cope with the unfamiliar and feel secure in the new setting.

Easing the child into day care

- Arrange for the child to visit your home with his parents on several occasions before he begins day care.
- When the child begins day care, suggest to his parents that he remain only a short time for the first few days, then gradually lengthen the time he stays.
- Leaving home and parents can be very hard for the young child. Greet him warmly when he arrives, telling him you are glad to see him and want to be with him.
- Discourage his parents from attempting to 'sneak out' on him. They should always tell him that they must go - but will return. Worrying that his parents may leave without letting him know will make him feel confused and anxious.
- Encourage him to bring something familiar from home - a favourite toy or an object he associates with his parents.





- Help the child get started in an activity. Though he may not choose to join in right away, continue to include him as he watches the other children play. He will see that good things happen in the day care home and soon will feel safe in getting involved.
- Take him on a tour of your house, showing him where the bathroom is and where he will eat, sleep and play.

A daily routine can be especially reassuring for a very young child, a child who has been in many different day care settings, and a child new to day care. The child's usual times for eating, sleeping, toileting and play should be respected and largely determined by the child's needs. The information from parents about the child's routine and habits at home will help you to follow as much as possible the child's own familiar routine. A reliable sequence of daily events becomes a source of security, because it reflects his need to feel sure about what is going to happen.

The length of time that a child takes to adjust to you and your home, and the ease of the adjustment, will vary. One child could take several weeks, another could be content right away. Before settling down, one child might express distress and outrage immediately, another might not react for weeks.

Both the parent and the child will need to be supported through this phase. If a parent is uneasy about leaving the child with you, the child, even if he is an infant, will sense this anxiety.

- Assure the parent that his child will gradually get used to being in your care.
- Understand that it is not unusual for a young child to revert to his infant ways as he adjusts to his new setting or to experience disruptions in his normal eating and sleeping patterns.
- Do not begin anything new, such as toilet training, during these first few weeks.

- Give the parent positive feedback about the child's day; for example, by telling him if the child gets involved in an activity as soon as the parent leaves.

Going home

The end of a day at the care giver's home can be a difficult time for all concerned. The parents, the children and the care giver may all be tired and have little patience left. But, with a little organization and preparation, problems can be avoided.

- It is difficult for a young child to stop playing immediately and pay attention to a parent who has just arrived. Tell the child when it is almost time for the parent to arrive.
- Help him to put away his toys and gather any items he will be taking home. Both the parent and the child will feel better if everything is ready to go.
- If you are exchanging information with the parent about his day, be tactful and positive, or include the child in the conversation.

Self-esteem

A child's capacity to learn is strongly influenced by the development of a good feeling about himself and confidence in his ability to do things. He needs to have the stage set for successful encounters with his environment and the important adults in it.

The child's sense of self and desire to learn begins in infancy and is nurtured through contact with responsive adults who have a reasonable sense of self-confidence.

The child who is exposed to interesting activities and opportunities to practise his emerging skills, with your support and encouragement, will feel like a valued and responsible person.

You can help a child to feel good about himself and encourage his development in a number of ways.

- Recognize and respond to all the child's needs – food, rest, exercise, protection from harm and activities suited to his level.
- Understand the physical limitations of each child and be realistic about what you expect from him.
- Understand and respect a child's emotional limits and watch for behaviour that shows he needs help to cope with a situation.
- Provide children with lots of opportunities to make their own decisions and to learn from the consequences of their actions, about how things work and how to get along with other people. They will make mistakes but as long as their efforts don't result in repeated frustrations and failures, they will keep trying.
- Offer encouragement and aid when they are frustrated.
- Show them that you are pleased with their accomplishments and efforts.
- Take care not to criticize or belittle them if their efforts are less than successful.
- Prepare young children for moving from one activity to another, explaining what to expect and giving them time to adjust.
- Understand and respect the life-style or religious practices of a child's family.

Effective use of space

Through the arrangement of furniture and play materials and the thoughtful use of space, you can make it easier to care for active children and give them a sense of belonging.

- Provide a special place for each child's collection of art work and personal 'treasures'.
- Arrange the furniture in the play areas to allow for small nooks where the children can retreat for privacy.
- Provide a variety of activity areas where more than one type of play can be going on at the same time.

The arrangement of shelves and furniture can help establish the boundaries for each activity and allow the children to pursue an activity without interruption.

- Place toys and play materials where the child can make his own selections without having to ask.



The arrangement of furniture and equipment can be used to help let the children know what you expect.

- If puzzles or toys with small pieces are to be played with on a table, place them on a shelf or other surface near the table.
- If outer clothing is to be hung up by the children when they arrive, install hooks easily within their reach.
- If the children are not to run up and down the room, don't leave a long, open floor space.
- If you want them to clean up their own spills and mishaps, have safe cleaning materials within their reach.
- Child-sized furniture and equipment will make their environment more comfortable and manageable. Child-sized cups, for example, will make spills less likely.
- Using shelves instead of a toy box to store toys makes it easier for children to play without taking out all the toys.

Setting limits on behaviour

Certain behaviour by children should not be permitted. A child cannot be allowed to hurt another child or to pursue an activity which is dangerous or will damage property. The rules should be few in number and understood by the children. Clear limits should prevent a child from hurting himself and others but give him ample opportunity to explore and develop.

Understanding the children will enable you to step in and avoid problems. A child who is tired, bored, hungry or in need of attention or reassurance may signal this need by misbehaving.

When you do have to step in, use a natural voice and keep the message simple. Words may be unnecessary; a touch on the shoulder or facial expression may be enough to remind a child of the rules.

Children learn behaviour by imitating adults' ways of dealing with situations and feelings. It is important to encourage them to express their feelings – their joy, sorrow, anger, frustration or fear. Letting feelings out without hurting anyone or destroying property is a major feat for a child. You can help the child by teaching him to put his feelings in words or by suggesting a vigorous activity, such as pounding clay, when an angry outburst is looming.

Remember, children cannot follow a good example if you are setting a bad one. Hurting a child or isolating him, shaking him, or shouting at him are not appropriate ways for an adult to behave. If a child is in the midst of an angry outburst, your job is to help him gain control. A hug and reassuring words can go a long way to help a child who has lost control. State calmly and clearly why you had to stop his behaviour; show him that you understand he is angry and you are there to help him regain control. Occasionally, you may have to hold a child until he quiets down. The difference between holding him and hitting him is enormous. Adults who hold a child are protecting as well as controlling.

Sometimes a child may have to be removed from a situation so that he has time to regain control and take responsibility for his actions. However, too long a period of removal only produces resentment. Guilt or shame are not constructive and have no place in teaching appropriate behaviour.

When a child is hurt by another child, both children require your attention. The hurt child may need first aid and comfort. The child who misbehaved may be just as frightened. He needs to be told that his action was wrong and cannot be repeated because it hurts other people. At the same time, he needs to understand that you don't dislike him.

There are ways to minimize the situations in which trouble can arise.

- Plan a program that is suitable for the ages and needs of all the children.
- Give a child a choice only when you intend to provide options.
- Show disapproval of the act of misbehaving, not of the child.
- Set suitable rules and limits and help the children to understand these and the reasons for them.
- Let the children know that what they do and how they behave is important to you.
- Be consistent in ensuring that the limits you set are respected.
- Remember that it is very difficult for a child to sit and wait even for a few minutes.
- Offer a substitute for what a child cannot do or have. A child who is running in the house should be given an alternative activity such as playing with clay or play dough. A child who desperately wants a toy belonging to another child can be offered a different toy or activity.



- Keep instructions short and simple, especially for younger children. They can deal with only so much information at once. Give one instruction at a time and allow time for the child to carry it out.
- Discuss with parents the limits you have set for their children.

Infants in day care

Every infant enters the world with the potential to be a responsive human being. He has feelings and needs that are uniquely his own. But whether he ever achieves his potential depends on his surroundings, experiences, health and his interactions with people.

Not only do babies need a good diet and good physical care to thrive, they also need affection and attention from a warm-hearted and caring adult who responds consistently to their tears, smiles, gestures and desire to explore the world around them.

Exploring his world

The infant who is offered ample opportunity to explore in safe area with interesting playthings and an adult's attention will continue to be interested in the world around him. His knowledge of and interest in the world, his ability to make discoveries and absorb information, will blossom when his efforts are encouraged and activities neither too difficult nor too simple are provided.

Learning to communicate

Long before he can use words, he can recognize the sound of his own name, the voices of familiar adults and words that let him know that his lunch is coming. Once a child is a year old, he will understand much of what is said to him and may try to 'talk' in response.

To an infant, all his waking hours are for learning. At diaper-changing times there is a special opportunity for him to learn from you and interact with you. As he kicks energetically without his diaper, talk to him and encourage him to respond. Coos, giggles and smiles, even tears, are the beginning of communication. And the two of you can and should communicate at many other times of the day, as well.

By the time he is three, the child will be comfortable with sentences and will mimic what he hears from the people he is with. A seemingly endless stream of questions and conversation will now greet his favourite adults. It's well worth the effort to respond to these questions. The exchange allows the child to check his understanding of words, to make his feelings known and turn new thoughts into more words.

Separation anxiety

It is unusual for a baby under the age of seven months to show signs of stress in a new situation or with unfamiliar adults. If the parent and care giver have worked together to minimize changes in the child's routine and to have familiar toys or other items from home on hand, his adjustment to day care should not be too difficult.

Between the ages of seven and 12 months, a baby is more sophisticated at recognizing his environment and in knowing who is unfamiliar. His response at this age to people outside his family may be stormy and include disruptions in eating and napping. This is not a reflection on the care giver or the care itself, but is caused by newly discovered information; for example, that you are not his parent. Reassuring him in a calm and relaxed manner with hugs and a soft voice and providing consistent reliable care will help him through this stage.

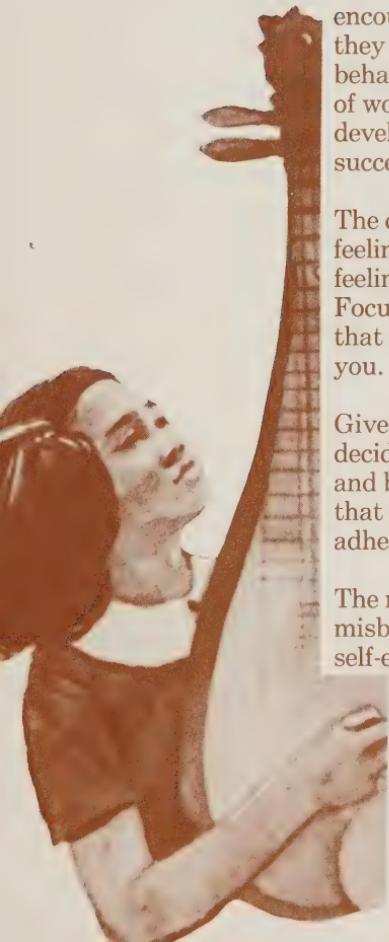
Toilet training

A child in his first year is not yet in control of his bowels or bladder: any attempts at toilet training are premature. When the child has been walking long enough to feel reasonably secure with this ability, has mastered sufficient words associated with toileting, and gives some indication that he is ready then toilet training can begin. Both you and the parent should discuss how best to carry out the training. Find out what the parent is doing at home to help the child. It is less confusing for the child if the expectations at home and at the day care home are similar.

Use a low chair or potty, whatever the child is comfortable with. Gaining control is often a lengthy process with many ups and downs. Accidents are part of the learning process, particularly if the child is ill, tired, or involved in an activity or any stressful situation. Each child gains control at a different age. There is no need to hurry it along. When he is successful, show that you are pleased; when he has an accident, change him into dry clothes quickly and calmly without scolding.

The school-age child

The school-age child is gradually moving from a world that centres on his family to a new one in which school and children his age figure prominently. How he feels about himself and his emerging skills is largely determined by how well he can do things like riding a bicycle or reading, and how much he is liked and accepted by his peers. Much of the child's school day is probably organized for him. In a day care home the child can be allowed much the same freedom he would have in his own home. He is able to select his own activities, read quietly, play by himself, or with a friend. The school-age child needs a place in the day care home where he can be apart from younger children. Understanding his need for time alone and permitting him to choose his playmates and play activities shows you respect him as being a more grown-up person.



You might encourage a child's hobby by helping him add to a special collection. Make available the tools he requires to pursue his interest, and provide a safe place for him to keep his project. Sewing supplies and scrap material, experiments in cooking and gardening, and children's tools for woodworking all hold the prospect of a real finished product and allow him to practise and refine his skills. The arts and crafts materials you provide for younger children can be used by the school-age child; he will simply use them in a more mature way.

Encourage the children to pursue activities that will help to develop muscle and body strength and provide a much-needed release for physical energy. Make available playthings such as skipping ropes, balls, games and construction materials that encourage group activities. Through group play they encounter rules and practise co-operative behaviour. They experience the joy and frustrations of working in groups and have the opportunity to develop and practise the skill necessary to work successfully with people.

The child is continuing to learn how to cope with his feelings, how to express himself, and to show these feelings without hurting himself or other people. Focus on the strengths of the child and show him that what he does and how he feels is important to you.

Give the school-age child an opportunity to help decide on the rules. Make reasonable rules or limits and be certain that the child understands them and that you both know these limits will be consistently adhered to.

The result of a broken rule should deal with the misbehaviour and not insult or threaten the child's self-esteem.

Give some responsibilities to the child. He can help with a number of household chores, such as being responsible for his own work or play area, tidying up or helping with the dishes.

Younger children often respond enthusiastically to an older child's instruction and attention in play activities. The school-age child may be happy to read to younger children or show them how to use scissors, a paintbrush or other interesting tools.

As with younger children, it is important that there be agreement between the care giver and the parent on a variety of situations that may arise while the child is with the day care giver.

- Is the child allowed to go to school or a local park unescorted?
- Will the child participate in after-school activities such as sports or clubs?
- Does the child have permission to bring friends over after school or to go to his friends' homes?
- Does his school have your name, address and telephone number if there is an emergency and his parents cannot be reached?
- Will the child do his homework at your home or his own home?
- A natural product of growing up is the steady stream of questions on a variety of topics. Questions about school, having babies, growing up, are the child's way of finding out about the world. You may want to discuss with the parents how they deal with queries like these and tell them about discussions you have had with their child.



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While it is difficult to predict all the factors that will influence the content of your program, here is a list of basic considerations.

- The number of children you accept into your home (up to five) should be determined by your ability to give each child the attention, care and protection he needs. You should be able to supervise all of them easily and be able to evacuate them immediately in an emergency. Accepting children in different age groups will require flexibility in routines, activities, and expectations.
- The time the children arrive and depart will affect the time and amount of food and rest they should have. A child who arrives early in the morning may need more sleep and perhaps breakfast.
- Parents' expectations will influence your choice of activities and the routine of each child's day.
- School-age children may be at your home all day on professional development days, also on holidays and during summer vacations, depending on the arrangements you have made with the parents.
- Infants, handicapped children, and certain other children may need special attention.

Children need routine times for eating and resting and a set of rules and limits that are reasonable and consistent. They need an environment that is neither

so stimulating and noisy that it is overwhelming nor with so few activities that it is boring. They need to be protected and safe but also need room to explore.

Learning through playing

The child learns through playing. He develops the skills necessary to get along with other people, uses language to express ideas and feelings, acquires new skills and polishes old ones, and learns to work out problems by trying out a variety of solutions. The child needs activities and tasks that are challenging enough to hold his interest but within his abilities so that he feels successful.

Toys and play materials

Table toys

- Provide a play area for table toys on a table or floor that is away from the hub of household activity.
- Make up games that involve sorting objects by colour or shape. The children will enjoy toys that require them to arrange items in a particular order; for example, big to little. Also try matching games, lottos, commercially produced games, puzzles, peg boards, beads and laces.
- These games can help children practise problem solving and learn about numbers, letters, shapes, weights, colours and sizes.

Music and moving

- A carpeted floor will reduce noise, and soft, comfortable furniture or cushions will add to the enjoyment.
- Records, tapes and simple musical instruments are suggested.
- Encourage the children to sing songs and to accompany these with such movements as clapping, hopping, marching or skipping.

- These activities will provide an outlet for energy, teach different means of expression, promote language development, and develop balance and rhythm.

Blocks

- Provide a carpeted area, if possible, away from the regular household traffic.
- Have lots of blocks in different shapes and sizes, and cardboard boxes and sponges which can also be used as building materials.
- Add wooden or plastic toy people, cars, trucks and animals.
- These games allow children to arrange and manipulate their environment, to achieve a sense of mastery by knocking down their creations, and to participate in co-operative play.

Imaginative play

- Provide old clothes and accessories such as dresses, jackets, ties, hats, wigs, and handbags and a variety of props such as paper money and dolls.
- Transform cardboard boxes, shoe boxes, and baskets into furnishings for an imaginary house, store, hospital or other setting.
- Set up a shatter-proof mirror for the children to view their creations.
- Imaginative play allows a child to act out real-life situations and mimic the world of adults. It gives him an opportunity to practise talking and being social, and provides an outlet for expressing emotions and working out problems.

Arts and crafts

- The children can use a table, the floor, or an easel, as a work space.
- Provide old shirts or aprons to protect clothing and have clean-up materials handy.

- Materials can include long-handled paintbrushes, sponges, finger paints, crayons, pastels, pencils, markers and collage material such as dry pasta, scrap material, clean eggshells, buttons and other sewing supplies, paste and glue, clay, plasticine, and play dough.
- Arts and crafts are a failure-proof, pleasing activity in which children can express their feelings and discover new materials.

Science and nature

Use a quiet area that can accommodate a group or an individual.

- Organize cooking activities using household equipment; provide magnets, a magnifying glass, books on simple experiments; collect leaves, stones or feathers; plant seeds and show the children how to care for them; put up a bird feeder.
- These activities will improve the children's vocabularies, give them responsibility for looking after something, improve their observational skills, and help them learn to count and to sort objects into groups.

Books and stories

- A quiet area with comfortable furniture or cushions is preferable.
- Display some books and magazines on a shelf where children can make their own selections.
- Read to the children and ask them to make up their own stories perhaps using a puppet as a prop.
- Reading improves a child's vocabulary, gives him new ways of expressing himself, helps him understand that the written word has meaning, introduces him to new situations, and can prepare him for coming events such as a trip to the doctor or the zoo.

- By making up their own stories, children learn to use their imagination.

Water play

- Children can play water games indoors or outdoors.
- Put small amounts of water in plastic bins, old baby baths or tubs.
- Add small toys and tools, containers for pouring, funnels, soap to make bubbles or scrub a doll, and things that float or sink.
- Always supervise children who are playing with water.

Sand play

- Indoors, a plastic drop sheet will protect the floor.
- Fill a basin or bin with sand; leave it dry or add some water.
- Supply digging toys, small containers, and toy cars and people.
- Always supervise young children.

Television

- Television is rarely considered appropriate for very young children.
- Some programs, especially the ones designed for children, can provide a learning experience. Ideally, an adult should also view the program and join in a discussion on what has been seen.
- Television viewing should not be a regular activity. The set should be kept where you can control its operation.

Vigorous activities

- Vigorous activities should be performed in a safe and accessible outdoor play area or indoors in an open space away from quiet activities.
- Equipment might include swings, a climbing structure, balls, bean bags, an old mattress, tires, toys with wheels, snow shovels, and sand pails and shovels.
- You might also create an obstacle course by providing mattresses on the floor to jump on, tables to crawl under, boxes to crawl into, and so on. Outdoors, or in a large open space indoors, you could add tires to climb over.
- This type of activity aids muscle development, helps children learn to judge space and distance, lets them experiment with different ways of using their bodies, gives them an outlet for their energy and feelings, and helps them feel good about their abilities.

Learning about the community

- Explore your neighbourhood with the children.
- Arrange for a visit to the library, the police or fire station, the zoo, a community recreation centre.
- Looking forward to a trip can be enough to turn a normally well-behaved child into an anxious out-of-control child if he is not adequately prepared. Tell the children where they are going, how they will get there, what they will see or do, what the limits or rules are, and when they will be returning.

Selecting toys

- In any household there are many safe and interesting materials that can be used in addition to commercial play materials and toys.
- Select those that encourage a child to be actively involved.

- Choose toys that can be controlled by the child, or altered either physically or through imagination.
- Include toys that can be used either by one child or a group of children.
- Choose some toys and playthings that mimic adult tools and objects but are appropriate to the child's age and abilities.
- Use toys that introduce a new concept or that allow children to learn new skills or practise acquired skills.
- All toys should be safe, durable and able to withstand rough treatment.
- When money is limited, invest in play materials that are versatile and not limited to one age group. Among these are: commercial clay, plasticine, scissors and paste, paint brushes and paint, blocks, boxes, markers, crayons, coloured pencils, chalk and pastels.



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A healthy child is a happy child. The way to keep children healthy is to make sure they have sufficient sleep, good nutrition, immunization, good hygiene, exercise, outdoor recreation, and clothing that protects them from the cold or shields them from the burning rays of the sun. As a care giver, you need to know the basic principles of good health, some necessary precautions, and how to deal with illness when it strikes.

Hygiene

Children learn good health habits from adults. By letting the children see that you wash your own hands before meals and after using the toilet, and clean your teeth after meals, you will encourage them to follow your example.

Make sure they have their own clean face-cloths, towels, linens and blankets as well as their own combs and tooth-brushes. Let them view the final effect in a mirror.

Exercise

Daily exercise promotes strong muscles and you can encourage children in a daily exercise routine, either indoors or outdoors, by taking part yourself.

- Consult with a physical fitness expert to find out what exercises are appropriate for each age group.

- Check with the parents to make sure their children can participate in these exercises.
- Make sure that the children bring appropriate clothing to wear.
- Begin the exercises slowly.
- Alternate the activities to prevent boredom.
- Make it an enjoyable experience with lots of room and perhaps music and clapping.
- Provide opportunities during the day for vigorous play.

Immunization

To protect your own children and the other children in your care, you should ask to see the immunization records of every child you accept into your day care program.

Since the introduction of immunization, such diseases as diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella are now less common, but that doesn't mean that anyone should fail to take advantage of these safe, effective, and free vaccines.

The following immunization schedule is recommended by the Ontario Ministry of Health.

- Two months: A child should receive one injection that contains vaccines against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio.
- Four months: A second injection with the same four vaccines.
- Six months: A third injection with these vaccines.
- Twelve months: A single injection of the combined vaccines against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles).

- Between 16 and 18 months: The first booster shot of the vaccines against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio.
- Between 4 and 6 years: The second booster shot against the same four diseases.
- Between 11 and 12 years: The third booster against these diseases.
- Between 16 and 18 years: The fourth booster against these diseases.

Children entering school for the first time are now required by law to have full immunization protection.

The Ministry of Health recommends that adults have a polio vaccination every five years and a tetanus vaccination every 10 years. Women planning a family should have their immunization updated, especially against rubella, before they become pregnant. Adults working with children are encouraged to have a tuberculosis test every two years.

Allergies

You should be aware of any allergies suffered by the children in your care. Parents should explain both the symptoms and how and when you should administer the treatment, if necessary.

If you are caring for a child with allergies, these tips may help you lessen his discomfort.

- Check with the parents to see if any product has been prescribed and whether they would like you to use it for the child when he is in your home.
- Always wash new clothes, blankets and linens before using them.
- Don't insist that an allergic child eat foods he dislikes, as the food may not agree with him.



- Keep the humidity in your home between 35 and 45 per cent; a humidifier can be helpful for many allergy sufferers.
- Avoid aerosol sprays and perfumed products.
- Watch for symptoms of allergies when you introduce any new products to a child.

If you suspect a child in your care has allergies, you should discuss these observations with the child's parents, who should take the child to a physician. Offer to document the symptoms and try to determine what food or product is producing them.

Allergies may go undiagnosed in a child for a long time and detecting the cause of the problem may be difficult.

Here are some facts to remember.

- Allergies may affect any part of the body.
- A baby's symptoms from allergies may be swollen eyes, swollen lips, rashes, eczema, hives, nose and lung congestion, mucus, muscle spasm, vomiting, diarrhea, or colic.
- The most common causes of allergies in babies are milk, eggs and foods containing wheat.
- Babies should be watched carefully for any signs of an allergic reaction to new foods, medications, or products that touch their skin.
- Common causes of allergies in older children are milk, nuts and nut products, chocolate, eggs, fish, shellfish, citrus fruits, and foods containing whole wheat.
- Allergies can also be caused by soaps, ointments, cosmetics, cloth, plants, drugs, dust, sprays, pollens, moulds, animals and birds, among other things.
- An allergy to food may cause nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, constipation or respiratory trouble.

- Symptoms on the skin can be caused either by an allergy to food or an allergy to a product that has come into contact with the skin.
- Some allergic reactions, including reactions to insect bites, can lead to shock; if this occurs get immediate medical attention.

When a child is ill

As a care giver, you must decide how much responsibility you are willing to take for a child who is ill. It's a hard decision to make, but you do have a choice. Discuss the issue with the parents at the start of your relationship, establish an agreement, and stick to it. In reaching a decision, weigh the benefits of caring for a sick child against the risks of infecting you and your family and the other children and their families.

If you choose to accept a child who is recovering from an illness which is no longer at the contagious phase, provide an area for him to rest that is separated from the other children but within your hearing range.

Never leave a child who is sick or recuperating in a room alone. Get written permission from the parents before giving any medication and obtain from the parents written instructions from the child's doctor regarding the dosage for the medication. If the illness does not require that the child see a doctor, let the parents decide the best treatment and the child's menu and activities.

Have a clear understanding with parents about what you will do if their child becomes ill while he is in your care and you cannot contact them. If you have to take a child to the doctor, note his or her diagnosis and instructions for care and give them to the parents.

You should take the following precautions when caring for a sick child.



- Tell the child to use tissues to cover his mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of these tissues carefully.
- Keep the child's face free of mucus.
- Wash your hands after handling soiled tissues and diapers and before feeding the child.
- Avoid prolonged contact with the child.
- Wash the clothes, crib and toys he uses.
- Change your clothes when the child goes home, because clothing can transmit germs.
- Be aware of the early symptoms of illness in yourself and the children in your care.

Explain to the other children the situation regarding the sick child. If there is no risk that his illness is contagious, allow them to assist you in caring for him by, for example, taking him a drink or reading him a story. Ask them to help you provide the child with a calm and quiet environment by keeping their voices down and playing quiet games.

At the end of the day, you should update the parents of a sick child regarding:

- the amount of medicine you have given the child and the times it was given
- what and how much food and fluids the child consumed
- what activities he participated in
- when and how long he slept
- any unusual bowel or urine colorations
- any temperature fluctuations
- the child's general mood
- the general progress of the illness

Make sure that there is a constant and open exchange of information between you and the parent about care of the sick child. It is also important that the parents of the other children in

your care are aware of any illnesses their children may have come in contact with.

Common symptoms of illness

When you see that a child in your care is suffering from any of these symptoms, let the parent know at the end of the day.

- A cold, accompanied by a tight cough, wheezing, persistent cough, and sore throat.
- Fever of over 100°F (37.8°C), or if the child seems ill even with a slight temperature.
- Diarrhea (watery or greenish stools).
- Sudden decrease in appetite, or increased demand for liquids, particularly if accompanied by other symptoms.
- Red, swollen, itchy eyes, or a rash with spots appearing on the chest or other parts of the body.
- Either unusual paleness, and/or excessive crying, restlessness, prostration, unusual tiredness, or irritability.

For symptoms such as the following, it is best to let the parent know right away and obtain medical advice immediately.

- Injury to the head and if the child does not become normally active again within 15 minutes.
- Continual vomiting.
- Unconsciousness.

If illness is suspected

No symptom of illness should ever be ignored, particularly in an infant or a young child. The care giver should be aware of the symptoms of general illness and always observe children carefully to be sure to recognize the first signs of illness. Attend to an ill child immediately. Note the symptoms and the time they first appeared. Give this information to the parents – immediately if it is serious, later if it is minor. If the symptoms are minor at first but become worse during the day, follow the procedure for emergencies that you have worked out with the parents.

Never make a child feel guilty for complaining of illness. And don't worry about spoiling him by providing special attention; he needs to know that you understand and want to help.

Children and pets

Children must be protected from the pets in your home and your pets deserve protection from the children you care for. There are a number of ways that will help you keep a good relationship between children and pets.

- Pets should be supervised when around children.
- Be aware of the allergies that may be caused by cats, dogs, birds or other pets.
- Children not accustomed to animals may be frightened, and should be allowed to adjust slowly to the presence of a pet.
- Children should be cautioned about the pet's space and habits (for example, stay away from the animal when it is eating or sleeping).
- Children should be taught the rules of hygiene when they are with animals (for example, wash your hands after playing with a pet and before handling food; keep your face away from the pet).
- Small caged animals and aquariums should be removed to a room not occupied by the children.
- Ensure that the stand on which a birdcage rests is sufficiently stable to withstand a child pulling or pushing it; otherwise put bird and cage in a room closed to the children.
- Cats and dogs should definitely be vaccinated annually against rabies and distemper. Any animal with a disease or a sore should be kept away from children.
- Bites or scratches should be washed immediately with soap and water. See a doctor if the skin is broken.

- Children should be instructed never to approach an unknown neighbourhood pet and to walk away from any unknown animal, domestic or wild, that tries to make friends with them.
- Cover a sandbox when it is not being used.

Child abuse

As a person working directly with children, it is important to be aware of the subject of child abuse.

The *Child Welfare Act* of Ontario says that *anyone* who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected shall report these suspicions to the local children's aid society. It says further that anyone working in a professional capacity with children who fails to report his or her suspicions can be fined up to \$1,000.



The person who reports suspected violence or neglect cannot be sued for doing so "unless the giving of the information is done maliciously or without reasonable grounds to suspect that the information is true".

What is abuse? The law says that any child who has been physically harmed, seriously deprived of nutrition, care or affection, or sexually molested is an abused child. Child abuse includes actively hurting a child and passively failing to take proper care of a child.

Requirements to report child abuse will be continued with some changes under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

There are a number of signs that indicate a child has been abused.

- A physically abused child might have bruises, burns, cuts or scars.
- A neglected child could appear malnourished, frequently overtired, dirty or inappropriately clothed.

- A sexually molested child might have bruises, cuts, vaginal discharge, or venereal disease.
- An emotionally abused child might be unnaturally quiet and timid, overly active and aggressive, afraid of strangers or looking to strangers for affection.

Some abused infants exhibit what is described as “frozen watchfulness”. School-age children may also be too eager to please, manipulative or demanding of attention or food.

Who would hurt a child? Many of the people who hurt children are lonely or isolated. Others have been abused as children themselves, have no opportunity to learn how to care for children, have children who are difficult to handle, or have a lot of problems in their lives.

People who inflict child abuse may do so under the guise of discipline or out of ignorance, frustration, hatred or anger. They need just as much help as the abused child does.

Research studies have shown that in three-quarters of child abuse cases, the abuser is the child's parent. In the remainder, the abusers are substitute parents, temporary guardians, brothers, sisters, or other relatives.

There is also evidence to suggest that some children are more vulnerable to child abuse than others. For different reasons in different situations, one child may have characteristics that make him more likely to be a victim of abuse than another child in the same family.

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Children learn safety from the adults around them. If you set a positive example by consciously and consistently taking safety precautions, children will gradually learn to take responsibility for their own safety. Always explain to the child why the safety precautions were taken.

The best safety precaution you can take with children is never to leave them unattended.

In order to help prevent accidents around your home, you should adhere to the following safety checklist.

Safety in the home

Outside

- No broken bottles, cigarette butts or other dangerous objects
- No loose steps or railings
- No sharp corners or slivers on play equipment
- No toxic plants
- All garden and lawn tools locked away
- Secure fence around play area

- Remove doors from refrigerators and freezers no longer in use

Inside

- No frayed extension cords or overloaded wall plugs
- No smoking materials such as lighters, matches, ashtrays; no plastic bags; no guns; no knives, or other dangerous tools within the reach of children
- No toxic plants
- Safety caps on electrical wall outlets
- Windows and screens that can be securely locked
- Stairways with gates and handrails
- Balcony doors closed
- Smoke detectors
- Closed or locked doors to rooms that are off-limits
- Covers on exposed pipe and radiators
- Thermostat on hot-water heater turned down. (The federal Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs recommends 38-54°C to prevent scalds and burns)
- Emergency evacuation plan

Bedroom

- No diaper pins, other sharp objects, or dangling strings from curtains or blinds within the children's reach
- No electrical appliances, clocks, vaporizers or heaters within the children's reach

Bathroom

- No drugs, medicines, cosmetics or objects such as razor blades within the children's reach
- No electrical appliances, hair dryers, curlers or radios within the children's reach
- Plastic or paper disposable cups instead of drinking glasses
- Lock on bathroom door that can be opened from the outside

Kitchen

- Pot handles turned to the back of the stove
- All cleaners, poisons, soaps, bleaches, polishes, alcohol and plastic bags out of the reach of children
- Safety locks on all accessible cupboards
- Fire extinguisher in convenient place.

Remember to knot all plastic bags or punch holes in them before throwing them out. Read the labels of all chemical products and use the warning symbols as a guide to handling them.

Water safety



Whenever a child is playing near water, whether it's a bathtub, a backyard swimming pool, a toddler's swimming pool, a lake, creek or well, he must never be left alone for even a minute. Even after small children have mastered swimming, they must always be supervised.

Never put more than a few inches of water in a toddler's pool. The water level should be lower than the height to which the child can raise his head to breathe and call for help should he fall in face first. When constant supervision is not possible around wading and swimming pools, they should be drained and made inaccessible. Small children can drown in three to four inches of water. Never leave a bucket of water unattended on the floor if babies are close by.

If you own a pool, ensure that it is adequately fenced and that the gate can be securely locked. You should refer to your local by-laws regarding safety requirements. Of course the use of the pool, or any water-play areas, by the children you are caring for must be approved of in advance by the parent(s) of each.

It is important that you know how to perform rescue breathing (artificial respiration). Your local Red Cross has information on water safety including artificial respiration and how to keep a backyard pool safe for children.

Provided the parents give their approval, you may decide to take the children swimming. It is the care giver's responsibility to ensure their safety. Be sure you have full information about such essential matters as water depth, current, water purity, underlying ground (rock, sand, mud, and so on) in the place where they swim.

How to poison-proof your home

There are several things you can do to poison-proof your home.

- Do not store medicines with other household products.
- Keep all poisons in the original container, never in cups, bowls, coffee tins, or soft drink containers.
- Keep vitamins locked up – to a child, any tablet resembles candy. Never suggest to a child that medicine tastes like candy.
- Keep all bottles, cans and containers correctly labelled.
- Use a prescription drug only for the person for whom it is intended.
- Avoid taking medication in front of children; they copy adults.



- Clean out medicine cabinet regularly; flush old pills and medicine down the toilet or return them to the pharmacist.
- Move dangerous house plants (poinsettia and Jerusalem cherry are two examples) to a safe place; you might put them on a high shelf out of the way.
- Keep your purse out of the children's reach.
- Do not leave cosmetics on dresser tops or in the bathroom.
- Keep the telephone number of the Poison Information Centre or the Hospital Emergency Department beside the telephone.
- Warn children never to eat plants or berries. On walks or in the field, they should never eat or pick mushrooms of any kind or colour, and should check with you before they sample any of the wild berries.

If an accidental poisoning occurs, or is suspected, act quickly.

- Identify the poison and amount taken.
- Contact the Poison Information Centre, the Hospital Emergency Department or the child's family doctor, for assistance.
- If necessary, take the child to the nearest hospital emergency department. This does not necessarily mean you need an ambulance – a family car or immediate source of 'door-to-door' transportation can be faster.
- Bring the package or container or suspected poison with you.
- The poison control centre will give you instructions. Do not induce vomiting unless advised to do so. A corrosive substance, (such as oven cleaner, ammonia, bleach) will burn the child again if it is vomited. Petroleum-based products, (such as kerosene, paint thinners, furniture polish) may be inhaled into the lungs during vomiting and cause pneumonia.

Transportation and safety

If you use your own motor vehicle to transport any of the children for whom you are providing day care, you should be aware of the safety precautions that the law requires you to take.

According to the Ontario *Highway Traffic Act*, it is the driver's responsibility to make sure that the seat-belts of all passengers under the age of 16 are buckled up.

Effective Nov. 1, 1983, the law requires that *all infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers* must be appropriately and correctly restrained.

- Infants up to 9 kg (20 lbs.) must travel in a rear-facing child restraint seat.
- Toddlers from 9-18 kg (20-40 lbs.) must travel in a child restraint seat conforming to the requirements of the Children's Car Seats and Harnesses Regulations. When a toddler travels in a vehicle, other than his parents' or legal guardians, a lap belt may be used.
- Pre-schoolers from 18-23 kg (40-50 lbs.) must use a lap belt if they have outgrown the safety seat. At 23 kg (50 lbs.) the child should use the full seat-belt assembly.

Further, the car safety seat must be securely attached to the car by the seat-belt assembly as recommended by the manufacturer. All harnesses, straps and buckles must be properly adjusted and securely fastened.

The driver of the car carrying children should remember the following points.

- The back seat is always the safest place for the child to travel.
- Always travel with names, addresses and telephone numbers of children and parents.
- Always carry a first-aid kit.



- Never leave children unattended in the car, even for one moment.
- Check automobile insurance.
- Make sure that the hazard lights (flashers) on your car are working.
- Carry an extra set of keys on your person.

Children travelling in a car should be given clear instructions.

- Keep hands and arms in the vehicle.
- Do not put objects out of the window.
- Never touch the steering wheel or driving controls.
- Lock the doors.
- Do not rough-house or make a lot of noise.
- Do not touch the door and window handles.
- Stay seated.
- Always leave the vehicle from the curb side.
- Do not eat food or drink when the car is moving.

Safety near traffic

It is important that you understand and explain the rules of the road to the children in your care. Even young children are capable of learning how to behave in traffic.

When you are on walks, point out all traffic in signs and signals, use the crosswalks, obey crossing guards, and discuss pedestrian safety rules.

Discuss fully the dangers of playing near traffic – for example, that it is unsafe to retrieve a ball that has gone into the street or cross the street between parked cars.

If the parents have approved their school-age child's use of a bicycle while in your care, make certain that the child understands the rules of the road as they apply to bicycle riding.

Safety in the community

Be clear in defining appropriate play areas.

Know your neighbourhood and instruct older children, who are allowed to play away from your property, of possible dangers. These could include

- nearby construction sites
- creeks, rivers, swimming pools
- sewage areas and sewer pipes
- hydro poles and hydro rights of way
- heavy traffic intersections
- highways
- large commercial metal containers
- industrial areas
- abandoned buildings
- railway tracks

Emphasize that children should never take rides with strangers or walk along with strangers, nor should they accept food or candy from strangers.

Choosing safe toys and keeping them in good condition

Taking necessary safety precautions when you purchase and use children's toys can prevent accidents from occurring. Special safety regulations for toys sold in Canada exist under the federal *Hazardous Products Act*.

Here are some tips for choosing toys and keeping them in good condition.

- When choosing toys, use the recommended age labelling as a guide and look for warning or safety messages on the package.
- Read carefully any instructions provided with the toy.
- Take the time to teach the child how to use the toy properly.

- All toys should be kept clean and in good repair. Examine toys regularly for wear and tear. Loose parts, jagged or sharp edges and points can be hazardous.
- Discard a broken toy if it cannot be repaired.

Safety for babies

Protecting babies from harm requires extra safety precautions.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (crib death)

There has been a considerable amount of research in recent years into Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or crib death.

Should you accept an infant into your care, especially a very young infant, it is advisable to check periodically while he is sleeping. Furthermore a knowledge of the artificial respiration techniques for babies is recommended.

Furniture for infants

- Never use furniture that has any major damage.
- Be on the lookout for loosened parts of furniture and equipment that could come free and choke an infant or lessen overall durability.
- Make sure the mattress fits the furniture to prevent baby from rolling into excess space and becoming trapped.
- Replace lost hardware in baby furniture with proper parts, not something homemade.
- Never assume that a three- or four-month-old baby cannot roll over or wriggle off a surface or climb out of a highchair. The motor development of an infant can change quickly: one day the infant cannot stand up in the crib – and the next day he can stand up and, if the sides are not high enough, fall over to the floor.

Play-pens

Under the *Hazardous Products Act*, it is illegal to sell a play-pen, new or used, mesh or wooden, which does not meet the following requirements.

- The mesh should be mosquito-type netting to prevent clothing, buttons or hooks getting caught.
- No play-pen should have more than two wheels or castors, to reduce play-pen movement.
- All play-pens should be stable and sturdy with walls at least 48 cm high.
- All parts must be free from rough or sharp edges, and hinges should be designed to prevent the baby from being pinched.
- If you have an older play-pen containing wide mesh, make sure the child's clothing does not have buttons or hooks which can become entangled.
- Regularly check the play-pen and either repair or discard a damaged product.
- Check for loose parts.
- Check for tears in vinyl rails or mattress pads. Small pieces, if bitten off by the child, could cause choking or suffocation.
- Large (for example, stuffed) toys, left in the play-pen, can be used as "steps" in attempted escapes.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the child is well clear of moving parts and hinges when erecting a play-pen or lowering its sides.
- Once a child can climb out, the play-pen no longer serves its purpose and should not be used.

- If the mattress pad is replaced, make sure it fits tightly and that, when pushed into a corner, there is no more than a 4 cm (1½ inch) gap between the mattress and the opposite side or end of the play-pen.

Crib*s and *cradles

Safety standards for cribs, which came into effect in 1973, state that there should not be more than 6 cm (2½ ins.) between slats and a double lock on the drop side.

There are additional requirements.

- Sturdy overall construction: no missing hardware, missing or broken slats, cracks or sharpness.
- Side height from mattress support to top rail should be at least 66 cm (26 ins.).
- Mattress less than 15 cm (6 ins.) thick.
- When the mattress is pushed into one corner; there should be no more than a 4 cm (1½ inch) gap between the mattress and the opposite side or end of the crib frame.
- Avoid very soft mattresses; they can create “gap traps”.
- Avoid cribs that have corner posts, attached ornaments or cut-out headboard designs which could trap a child or his clothing and lead to strangulation.
- Adult-sized pillows are dangerous in bassinets (baskets used as cribs); use only a well-fitting, thin, firm mattress.
- An older crib or cradle can be made safer with a few simple adjustments described in the “Crib Backgrounders” available from Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada.
- You could also take additional action.

- Always check that the sides of a crib or play-pen are securely locked in place.
- Children should never be tied or harnessed in a crib or play-pen. Slack cords or elastics should be avoided as they could strangle a child.
- Remove bumper pads and large toys from a crib or play-pen when a baby can reach a standing position. This is the stage when objects can be used as steps for climbing out.
- Repair broken slats or bed springs to prevent a baby from falling through to the floor.

Pacifiers

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada has developed safety regulations for pacifiers, which are set out in the *Hazardous Products Act*. These are some of the provisions in the Act.

- The pacifier should be designed with sufficient strength and durability to withstand reasonable force, even after repeated boiling, and it should not break down into easily-swallowed components.
- The guard or shield should be larger and rigid enough to prevent the child from inserting the nipple too far into his mouth.
- Any cord attached to the pacifier should be short enough to prevent the pacifier from being hung around the neck.
- Avoid scarves, necklaces or other cords that might catch or entrap the child.
- All materials used in the pacifier should be non-toxic and, at the time of sale, sterile.
- Any ring or handle should be hinged, collapsible or flexible so that the pacifier cannot be forced into the mouth if the baby should fall or roll on his or her face.

- The condition of the child's pacifier should be checked regularly.

Rattles

Under the *Hazardous Products Act*, baby rattles must also meet strict safety requirements.

- A baby's rattle should be checked in terms of size with a gauge available from Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada.
- Rattles should not be breakable. They should be large enough so that they cannot be taken completely into the throat.

Physical space for babies

- Contents of rooms should be arranged to allow infants to move safely when they are out of their cribs.
- Heavy objects should be stable enough to support a baby if he uses them to pull himself up to a standing position.
- Radiators and floor heating vents should be covered.
- Do not use slippery throw rugs.
- There should be no unstable furniture or shelves that can fall over when baby begins to stand and grasp edges.
- Know which equipment and furniture should be used only when an adult is present.
- Provide a clean carpeted area for babies to crawl about on.
- Always protect baby from falls or bumping against sharp-edged objects.
- When a baby is sitting alone, watch him carefully.

- Check the temperature of bath water (with hand or elbow) before placing baby in the bath.
- Protect baby from stairways – a latched gate is one way to do that.

A baby with older children

- Instruct older children on what safety precautions they should follow when an infant is with them or near them.
- Never leave an infant in the care of another child.

Toys for babies

- Some toys may catch fire if they are too close to a lighted stove or fireplace.
- Toys that are safe for an older child may be dangerous for an infant.
- Check toys for sharp edges, removable pieces, pieces that can be bitten off, and small objects that can be swallowed.
- Babies will put anything into their mouths, so even commonplace items may be dangerous to them.
- Mobiles can be dangerous if they are within the reach of an infant.

Feeding babies

- All food utensils should be washed and stored in a clean place.
- Most physicians agree that solid foods should be introduced after four months. The actual time should be determined by the baby's physician.
- Introduce solid foods gradually.
- Introduce only one new food each week; watch for symptoms of intolerance.
- Place a baby in a sitting or near-sitting position when you are feeding him, to prevent choking.



- After feeding, always lay the baby down on his stomach with his head to one side to prevent choking or vomiting.
- Be gentle and relaxed when spoon-feeding baby; use a small spoon.
- Do not put the spoon too far into a baby's mouth or press on his tongue; by doing that you will cause him to gag or choke.
- Burp the baby well after feeding solids or fluids.
- The acid in some juices (for example, orange juice) can irritate the skin; wipe juice off the baby's face.
- Always test the temperature of fluids for the baby on the inside of your arm; they should be lukewarm.
- Always check labels of foods and fluids to determine whether you should dilute them. Some juices can feel painful in a baby's stomach and should be diluted.
- Be sure to ask the parents how much their baby usually eats. Always follow quantity measurements carefully in mixing formulas. If you add more formula than is called for or dilute it with extra fluid, you can upset the careful balance of nutrients (contents that provide nourishment) and fluid.
- Formula that is too weak can lead to malnutrition.
- Formula that is too strong can lead to kidney problems because the baby's kidneys cannot tolerate the overload of salts, minerals and protein.
- Sterilize all bottles and equipment by submerging them in rapidly boiling water for five minutes.

- Watch for food contamination (unclean or poisoned food); store leftover food carefully (in a refrigerator if necessary) or dispose of it. Read labels carefully to determine whether leftover formula can be re-used or should be thrown out.
- Keep the bottle top and nipple filled with liquid when feeding a baby to prevent him from swallowing air.
- Serve foods at room temperature, not hot.
- Never leave an infant unsupervised with a propped-up bottle – he may choke.
- Keep small items which can be swallowed or inhaled out of babies' reach (for example, safety pins, needles, nails, buttons, beads).
- Do not give babies peanuts (or any other nuts) or hard foods, because they may choke.

Emergencies

If there is an emergency it is important that you act quickly.

- Meet the emergency calmly and quietly.
- Remain in control of the situation.
- Record all information (even if it appears minor) for insurance purposes and because your records may indicate an unsafe feature in your home.

First aid

A first aid kit is only useful if you can find it easily and quickly and if it contains the items you need. At home, keep the first aid kit in the same place all the time. Always take along a first aid kit whenever you travel.

Check the contents of the kit regularly. The Canadian Red Cross Society recommends that a first aid kit contain at least the following items.

first aid manual	pencil and note pad
adhesive tape	emergency telephone numbers
tweezers	change for telephone
safety pins	blanket
dressings (gauze)	scissors
triangular bandages (16)	clean, water-proof container
adhesive dressing strips	

First aid courses

First aid courses can be a great help to adults caring for young children.

The Canadian Red Cross Society provides an *Emergency First Aid Course*, which teaches basic skills to deal with

- breathing emergencies
- severe bleeding
- shock
- poisoning
- loss of consciousness

This course is a minimum of six hours.

The society also offers a *Standard First Aid Course*, which teaches the basic skills listed above as well as the treatments for

- wounds
- bone and joint injuries
- burns
- head, neck and spine injuries
- exposure to harsh weather conditions

This course is a minimum of 15 hours.

The St. John Ambulance Society provides a number of courses which teach basic ways of preserving life and lessening the effects of injuries. The society offers a *Standard First Aid Course*, which is a

minimum of 16 hours and includes written and practical tests. Also offered is a *Child Care in the Home Course*, which focuses on the care of infants and pre-school children. This course is 15 hours long.

Calling an ambulance

Always remember that in an emergency you could save a life by knowing what to do before an ambulance and medical help arrives. Time is of the utmost importance - the brain can die four to six minutes after an individual stops breathing.

If an emergency occurs and you must call an ambulance:

Dial the emergency number given on the first page of your telephone directory. Ask for your local

- Hospital
- Police Station
- Fire Department

- Give your address or location, state the problem, and give your telephone number - in that order.
- Give an accurate description of the location, with landmarks to assist the driver and save time.
- Ask the dispatcher regarding what life-saving action to take.
- Do not hang up until you are told what to do.
- Keep the victim warm, lying down and quiet.
- Calm the victim by talking; tell him help is on the way.
- If possible, meet the ambulance.
- Give the ambulance crew any information you have about the patient and the illness or accident when it is requested.

- Tell the ambulance crew if you are qualified to help, but give help only when requested and according to their instructions.
- Do not try to help lift the stretcher unless you are asked.
- Help keep the bystanders calm and clear of the area.
- Use a private car or taxi if the injury or illness is minor.

Fire safety

Taking precautions

- Contact the local fire department and ask for a representative to come to your home to discuss fire safety with the children as well as with you.
- The local fire department can recommend an appropriate fire extinguisher and smoke detector, also the most effective place to install them. They can also help you to draw up the best evacuation plan for your home.
- Approved smoke detectors should be installed on each level of the house.
- Have at least one well-maintained and accessible fire extinguisher in your home.
- Discuss your fire safety plan with parents.
- Instruct children on how they will leave the house should fire break out.
- Practise the evacuation plan regularly and every time a new child joins your day care group.
- With practice, children aged 3 and over can be taught to react quickly and in a specific way to a given signal and move to the area chosen in your evacuation plan.

- Always keep exits uncluttered.
- Never use permanent bars to lock windows that may have to be used as fire exits.
- If there is a fire, accompany the children safely out of the building: do not assume they can find their own way. Make sure they do not return to the building.

Fire extinguishers

- Extinguishers should be kept in their designated place.
- Never obstruct access to an extinguisher.
- Check to make sure that the seals or tamper indicator are not broken.
- Check for any damage or defects, such as damaged hose, clogged nozzles, corrosion, leakage.
- Check to be sure that the maintenance record is kept up-to-date.
- At least once a year a knowledgeable person should examine the fire extinguishers to make sure that they are in good working order.
- Always keep the Fire Department's telephone number beside your telephone. Memorize the number if possible.

If fire breaks out

- Remain calm – always speak to children in a firm, distinct and calm voice.
- After detecting fire, sound the alarm and get everyone out of the home.
- Call the fire department from a neighbour's home. Always give your address first when you call in case you get interrupted.

- Never open a door without checking it for heat first. If a door is hot, or warm, leave it closed and go to a window. Wait by an open window. Place bedding at door cracks to keep smoke out.
- Smoke (hot gases) rise – stay low, near the ground. An open interior stair well can act as a chimney, allowing heat and smoke to rise to the highest floor level.
- Tell the firefighters immediately if anyone is left in the building.
- Never use an elevator.
- If you have to break a window, use a chair or heavy object. Remove jagged pieces of glass from the frame.
- In case of fire and required exit from a second or third floor, have accessible a fire escape rope or ladder.
- Once outside, never return to the house for possessions.

Grease fires

- Baking soda from a container kept near the stove will put out small fires from spilled fat.
- If a pan of fat catches fire, smother it with a lid or saucepan. Always wear oven mitts to remove the pan from the heat.

Fabric fires

- If clothing catches fire, wrap the victim in a blanket and roll to remove all air. Douse the victim with water. DON'T RUN – this fans the flame.
- The *Hazardous Products Act* sets standards and carries out tests to make sure that cloth articles sold commercially don't burn too fast.
- It is important to protect yourself and children.

- Don't be careless when near sources of high heat or open flame.
- Watch sleeves of clothes. Don't drag them over the hot element of a stove.
- Fabrics with a raised fibre surface tend to burn faster than fabrics with a smooth surface.
- Open-weave fabrics burn faster than tightly-woven fabrics.
- Loose-fitting garments with flaring skirts or sleeves, ruffles and trimmings ignite easily and burn rapidly.

When you are using fabrics either for ordinary wear or in play activities, you might find the following information useful.

- Lightweight fabrics (for example, cotton, linen, rayon) will burst into flame more easily and burn faster than heavier weight fabrics (for example, nylon, polyester, acrylic). These heavier weight fabrics do not ignite readily, and once on fire tend to drip and may stop burning.
- Wool and silk will not ignite easily; they burn slowly and tend to stop burning of their own accord.
- Fabrics made of glass or asbestos do not burn.

Lost children

The care giver should be with the children when they are outside, however there is always the chance that a child may wander away from your property and get lost. The following precautions can help you be prepared for such a possibility.

- Explain carefully to each child where the boundaries of the play area are; be sure that the children understand where they may play.

- Make sure that every child either knows your telephone number or carries a note of it in a pocket or attached to his clothing.
- Encourage group gatherings when the children are playing away from your "yard".
- Caution children never to wander off alone.
 - Stay close to the group.
 - Stay close to the home base.
 - Understand the rules of supervision.
- Tell children what to do if they are lost.
 - Stay calm.
 - Stay put; do not wander any further.
 - Ask for directions from a policeman or fireman.
 - Telephone the provider (child should know or have available the provider's telephone number).
- If a child has wandered off, you should take action at once.
 - Methodically search the house and yard.
 - Have a description of the child ready.
 - Telephone the police.
 - Get a back-up support person to stay with other children while you, the provider, are searching.
 - Check all known play areas of the child.
 - Check the child's home.



Food and nutrition

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As a care giver, you have an influence on children's eating habits and food choices. It is important not only to provide foods that are nutritionally sound but to follow good mealtime practices and promote a healthy attitude towards food. Our food choices and habits as adults are largely a product of our early experiences.

Begin by examining your own diet and eating habits. Recognize that there are many reasons for adults' selection and consumption of food. Adults may eat, for example, out of boredom, frustration and anger and rarely does this make them feel better.

You can help the children to have a healthy attitude towards food.

- Don't use food as a reward for good behaviour or as a comfort for a cut or bruise. Instead, tell the child you are pleased with him or offer a reassuring hug. Food is for satisfying hunger.
- Never force a child to eat or threaten him if he does not eat. To insist on a clean plate only encourages overeating. And threats can strengthen a child's resolve not to eat, upset a child so it is difficult for him to eat or swallow, or create a battleground for a power struggle.
- Don't deny a child food as a punishment; it is for growing and staying healthy and should not be turned into a weapon.



- Try to make mealtime as relaxed and unhurried as possible. It is easier for a child to chew and swallow in a pleasant, social atmosphere.
- Avoid strenuous activities before meals. These may make a child too excited or tired to eat properly. A quiet activity, such as reading a story, is a much better appetizer.
- If you give children a comfortable place to eat and child-size dishes, they will feel welcome and at ease.
- Allow the children to participate at mealtimes as much as possible. They can help set the table, serve the food and clear the table afterwards.
- It is only natural for parents to be interested in what their children eat while in your home, and a good way to start involving them might be to exchange recipes.
- Serve the food in small serving bowls and whenever possible allow the children to help themselves to the amount they want. Initially, they may take too much or too little but they will learn in time how much they can eat and will then be one step closer to caring for their own needs.
- Provide nutritious foods so the child has the nourishment he needs to stay healthy and grow. By not offering foods high only in calories or foods that are over-processed or high in sugar, you will also avoid the problem of having to limit a child's intake of these.
- If you give the children attractively arranged foods of different colours, tastes and textures, you offer meals that are more appealing.

While children are learning to feed themselves, a mess is inevitable. Learning to put food into their mouths, to eat solid foods, to use eating utensils, and to drink from a cup are major accomplishments for children. Tidiness and table manners will come later.

It is easier to teach children good eating habits and table manners if you eat with them, giving them an opportunity to follow your example. This will also lessen the need for verbal reminders.

When you are introducing a new food to a child, offer only a small portion and do not force him to eat it. He will be much more willing to try new foods if he knows he doesn't have to eat them. If he refuses a particular food on one occasion, try again later.

Keep in mind that children are vulnerable to the messages they get from adults. Words of encouragement and recognition of their efforts are more likely to succeed in getting them to try new foods or improve their skills with a knife and fork than telling them what poor eaters they are.

When you are confronted with a feeding problem, it is best to relax and not attach too much importance to the issue. Unless the child appears never to be hungry or unable to satisfy his appetite, which might warrant a visit to the doctor, the problem will take care of itself.

Between the ages of one and three, a child's growth rate slows down. At the same time, his ability and interest in exploring is increasing. So he may not want as much food and may regard mealtimes as an intrusion on this playtime.

Occasionally, a child may seem preoccupied with eating one type of food to the exclusion of all others. Unless this craving is for a food of questionable nutritional value, it is best to relax and wait until he gets over it.

Composing healthy, interesting menus can be a challenge. It involves selecting nutritious foods which are appealing to young children and within your budget. You may also have to take into account a child's allergies, religious restrictions, and other aspects of his diet.

If you are caring for an infant, the child's food and feeding schedule should be determined by the parents,

together with their doctor. The parents may supply the child's formula and instructions for use. The addition of solid foods to the infant's diet is determined by the parents and their doctor, as it will be adapted to the child's specific needs.

Canada's Food Guide

The Ontario Milk Marketing Board Nutrition Communications Department has adapted Canada's Food Guide to meet the needs of pre-schoolers, because they are unable to eat large amounts of food at a single sitting. The size of each serving from the four food groups is reduced, while the number of servings is increased. Here is an abbreviated version of the adaptation.

Milk and milk products

- Includes milk, yogurt and cheese
- Four to six child-sized servings a day
- Example of a child's serving: 125 mL (1/2 cup) of milk, 30 g (one ounce) of cheese, or 125 mL (1/2 cup) yogurt

Meat, fish, poultry and alternatives

- Includes meat, fish, poultry, eggs, peanut butter, dried peas and beans
- Three to four child-sized servings a day
- Example of a child's serving: 30 to 60 g (one to two ounces) of cooked fish, one egg, 30 mL (2 tablespoons) of peanut butter, 125 mL (1/2 cup) beans

Breads and cereals

- Includes whole grain bread, muffins, rice and pasta
- Three to six child-sized servings daily
- Example of a child's serving: $\frac{1}{2}$ to one slice of bread, one muffin, 125 mL (1/2 cup) cooked cereal

Fruits and vegetables

- Good sources of vitamin A: carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach and broccoli
- Good sources of vitamin C: oranges, tomatoes, broccoli and green peppers
- Four or more child-sized servings a day
- Example of a child's serving: 100 to 125 mL (1/2 to 1/3 cup) of unsweetened juice, 75 to 125 mL (1/4 cup) of fresh or cooked fruits and vegetables.

Using Canada's Food Guide is a starting point for planning a menu for the children in your care. Remember to choose foods from each of the four groups and to plan snacks that will complement the daily lunch. Include finger foods such as vegetable sticks and fruit sections and introduce new foods one at a time. Serve a tried-and-true food with a "mystery" food.

Some children find it easier to eat if the different foods on their plate do not touch each other.

While consumers have more information today than ever before about what constitutes a healthy diet, there are more highly processed and non-nutritional foods on the market now than there ever have been. Canada's Food Guide will help you in planning a healthy menu but you should also become an avid label reader. The ingredients are listed in decreasing order of weight.

Consider the salt and sugar content of foods. Sugar may be listed as sucrose, levulose, dextrose, malt syrup, fructose, corn sugar or glucose. Molasses, honey and brown sugar are generally regarded as more acceptable but none of them are particularly nutritious. Molasses retains some nutrients but the amounts are minimal and unreliable. Honey is also an unreliable source of nutrients and is not recommended for children under the age of one year, whose digestion cannot cope with the poisonous substances contained in most honey even if it has been pasteurized. Some brown sugars are made simply by adding molasses to refined white sugar.

When the bacterial enzymes in saliva combine with sugar, acids are produced. These acids are strong enough to dissolve the minerals in tooth enamel, exposing the interior of the tooth to decay.



Babies should not go to sleep with bottles or be allowed to have bottles in their mouths for long periods of time. When teeth are submerged in milk, juice or a sweetened drink, bacteria naturally present in the mouth combine with the sugars found in the liquid. The combination forms an acid that could cause enamel to be so weakened that the child's baby teeth have to be capped to prevent damage to the second set of teeth.

By contrast, the complex carbohydrates found in fruits and vegetables, grains and cereals are broken down into simple sugars in the intestines, not the mouth.

The taste for salt is learned. When preparing foods for children, reduce the amount of salt and omit foods that obviously contain salt, such as pretzels, salted crackers and potato chips. Many tinned and frozen prepared foods and baked goods contain salts, as a preservative and to increase the flavour. When purchasing foods, consult the list of ingredients for words that include salt, sodium or soda.

When choosing foods rich in protein, remember dried peas and beans are healthy and low-cost alternatives to meat, fish and poultry. However, while protein from animal sources contains the amino acids needed by the body for growth and tissue repair, the protein found in legumes, bread and cereals may lack some amino acids. By combining legumes – including navy beans, kidney beans, chick peas and lima beans – with rice, corn, wheat, sesame seeds, barley or oats, the proteins are completed.

When you are selecting fruit juices, read the label carefully. Unless it states "pure juice", the product may contain only 50 per cent juice. And if it reads "drink" there may be no more than 10 per cent juice.

Carbonated soda pop contains sugar, food dyes, artificial flavours, and often caffeine. It is not nutritious.

Remember, too, when shopping, that bigger is not necessarily cheaper. Bargains are only bargains if you can use them, and store brands or generic brands may be a better buy than nationally known brands. Save coupons for products you normally buy, and check the dates on items that are perishable.

You may take some easy steps to preparing food safely.

- Wash your hands with soap and water before you begin.
- Don't use cracked or chipped china; don't use cutting boards made of wood.
- Use rubber gloves to prepare food if there are cuts or sores on your hands.

Children can help prepare food

- Include children in the various aspects of food preparation. They can share in planning menus; this activity provides them with an opportunity to discover more about the kinds of foods needed to stay healthy. They can go with you on shopping trips. Older children who are able to read can be responsible for collecting certain items. Younger children could be supplied with a list that uses pictures of foods cut from magazines.
- For children to take part in preparing the food, a little thoughtful planning by the care giver is necessary.

However, through helping, children have an opportunity to develop and practise a variety of skills and concepts. If you let the children help you to prepare a new food, it may be more acceptable to them when the time comes to eat it.

- Assemble everything needed to complete the task at hand, including equipment and ingredients.

- Have several spoons and measuring utensils to ensure that each child has an item of equipment and at least one thing to do.
- Explain the recipe and directions before the children start.
- Your ability to relax and enjoy the experience, together with allowing plenty of time, will ensure the success of a project.
- Discuss the need for safety precautions: for example, how to behave around the stove, what to do with a hot finished product, and proper use of knives.
- Talk about the food's change in appearance and composition after it has been prepared.

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The following information illustrates some of the highlights in a child's development. It is intended as a guide to understanding a child's abilities and skills.

Remember that each child is different and each develops at his own pace. The child who has discovered the freedom that accompanies walking may not be at all interested in trying out new words for the time being.

The information will help you select activities that are suited to each child's abilities and encourage him to explore further.

Activities

Birth to 12 months

Motor development

Gross motor

- Give the baby freedom to move, then let him learn to creep, crawl and turn over. Play exercise games with him, such as moving his arms and legs. When he has gained more control over his back muscles (at about 3 months), he will enjoy sitting up for short periods. Toys held in front of him will encourage him to reach out and grasp.

- Around 6 months he will probably start to explore the possibilities of moving about; his attempts to roll, crawl and creep should be helped by a rug or blanket which will not slip or buckle underneath him.
- Provide him with the opportunity to pull himself up to a standing position, using solid furniture which he won't be able to tip over.
- Eventually he will be ready to step out. The ages at which babies will begin to walk vary a great deal. Take your cues from the baby. If he appears interested, offer support and encouragement. At any show of fear or reluctance, stop and try again another time.

Fine motor

- The very young infant will respond to bright objects and toys placed where he can see them. Crib toys safely attached to his crib will attract his attention and encourage him to practise reaching and grasping.
- Small toys and objects safe for baby will make him want to grasp and examine them. Choose objects that vary in shape, colour and texture.
- One day, at feeding time, you will find the infant eager to attempt to feed himself. Help him drink from a cup, provide finger foods and a spoon of his own to use when he is ready and interested. Spills and a mess are part of the process. Opportunities to practise will allow him to improve the way he feeds himself.

Sensory powers and learning

- Provide toys that invite him to use his sense of touch and are safe to bang and put in his mouth.
- Give him a soft plastic ball or a soft rag doll to grasp.
- Provide a variety of things for him to look at, even when he is very young; hang a mobile over his crib or play-pen.

- Play games by moving bright objects from side to side or in a circle. Talk about what you are doing. When he is older, play similar games holding him in your lap. Move toys in front of his eyes. If he tries to grasp a toy, let him have it to explore.
- Provide a “busy box” or “activity board” – put into a box or attach to a board such things as a door knob, latch, roller-skate wheel.
- The best way for him to learn how things look as they move is to let him move things himself and watch them change. Roll a ball towards him and let him try to move it himself.
- Hide part of a toy under a cloth or blanket. Encourage the child to hunt for it. Move an interesting object slowly behind your back.
- Place an object in a paper bag and encourage the child’s efforts to find it.

Self-awareness

- A blanket or toy from home is comforting to a child in an unfamiliar setting. Never tease or become angry with the child about his need for a comfort toy. It helps him cope with anxious moments.
- Name parts of the body for him. Hold a mirror in front of the infant and point to each part as it is named.
- Encourage his attempts to roll over, sit up, and crawl and explore.

Socio-emotional development

- Use his name whenever you talk to him. Touch him gently and soothingly. Show him different expressions. An older baby will attempt to mimic some of your actions.
- Hold him while he is receiving his bottle, rather than propping the bottle up for him in his crib.

Language

- Respond to the baby's coos and gurgles – this is his way of speaking to you. Smile and speak to him again. Imitate his sounds; show they are important. Even before he understands words, the baby will associate them with a pleasant experience.
- Talk about what you are doing: ("Let's change your diaper..."), name objects, provide words to describe his feelings.
- When an older baby makes a sound that is similar to a word, rather than imitate his sounds, say the word correctly.
- Use short sentences conveying a simple thought or instruction.
- Babies like to be sung to and will not criticize your voice.
- A baby likes to play with his fingers and toes; count them for him. He will enjoy "Peek-a-boo" and "This little pig went to market".

12 to 18 months

Motor development

Gross motor

- Provide pull toys and push toys, particularly those that make a noise.
- Give him large balls to kick and smaller balls to catch and throw.
- Set up an obstacle course with things to climb over and a surface to crawl under.
- Take him for short walks.
- Obtain a plastic or wooden hammer and a pounding bench and let him hammer the pegs.

Fine motor

- Provide objects varying in size, colour and texture for him to hold, feel and learn about. Show him picture books and let him turn the pages.
- Give him large crayons for drawing, finger painting, play dough.
- Offer blocks for building towers. His first attempts to place an object on top of another will prepare the way for more complex creations later on.

Sensory powers and learning

- Choose activities that involve the idea of size. Obtain big to little stacking toys. Put small toys in large toys. Blow up a balloon and, while he is watching, gradually let the air out; try it again, allowing the air to go out quickly (so that the balloon will fly across the room).
- Put small objects in a large container and take them out. Then let the child do it.
- Let him play with a variety of objects (things that float and things that sink) in a basin of water. Provide sand to play with. Add digging tools and small vehicles.
- Play music, sing songs and encourage the child to clap in rhythm, or bang a pot or cardboard box.

Self-awareness

- Provide a mirror, hats to put on, purses to fill. Talk about the clothes he is wearing. Use his name when you talk to him.
- He may begin to try and dress himself. It is a gradual process; give him time and encourage his attempts.
- His efforts to be independent will be apparent at feeding time, as well. Sit and talk to him while he is eating. Encourage his efforts to feed himself.

Socio-emotional development

- Involve the child in household activities. He will be interested in adult activities and attempt to imitate your actions.
- During trips with the child, talk to him about what he sees.
- By playing with dolls, he can practise doing many of the same things you are doing for him. Give the doll a bottle, toys to play with, naps and “pretend” food.
- Place blocks in a container and shake them. Let the child try to do the same.
- Provide a toy telephone and show him how to dial. Have telephone conversations.

Language

- Talk to him in short, complete sentences. Ask him to complete simple tasks, to place the toy on the shelf, or show you his nose. Put his actions into words. Use words to describe how things feel (soft, smooth, rough) or new ideas, (under, on, in), demonstrate for him with objects.
- Show him pictures of objects and label items for him.
- Use words like “after” and “before” so that he will begin to understand the difficult concept of time. (“Before we have lunch we will read a story”, or “After we put the toys away, it will be time for Mom to arrive.”)
- Ask him to name familiar objects.

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Resources for home day care providers

Providing care that is safe, secure and responsive to a child's needs is important work in your community. As a day care provider, try to meet other day care providers in your neighbourhood and seek out services that can give you information and add to the activities you are able to offer in your home.

Meeting other home day care providers in the community

Locating other people in your neighbourhood who provide day care in their home is the first step towards building a network of support and information. Together it is possible to organize projects and exchange information that benefits you, your service and the child. Many joint activities can be undertaken. Here are some examples.

- organizing group outings or a play group
- sharing toys and equipment
- purchasing food, craft materials and equipment in bulk
- developing a local registry of child care services
- arranging local workshops on nutrition, safety and child development

- providing for substitute care if a provider is ill or if there is an emergency
- sharing child care experiences and activities

How do you get started? There are several ways to choose from. Contact your local public health nurse; she may be aware of other people who are providing day care in their homes. Check child care listings in your local newspaper. Community Information Centres, neighbourhood day care or community registries may list home day care providers. Toy lending libraries, parent and child drop-in centres or play groups may be used by people providing day care.

Resources

Some or all of the following resources may be available in your community, and you will probably know of several more.

Public health units

Public health nurses provide counselling, teaching and co-ordination of community resources. Some may also provide instruction in child guidance.

Fire Department/ Police Department

Officials from both these departments will provide assistance in fire safety, home evacuation plans and traffic safety.

Public library

Books on activities for children, parenting and child development are available at your local library. Once they know the ages of the children in your care, librarians will recommend and help you choose story-books they will enjoy. Toys, records and films may be available on loan, and there may be activities such as story-telling, puppet shows and movies.

**Recreation centres
YM-YWCAs/Ethnic
organizations**

Many organizations such as these run a variety of programs suitable for children, including sports and crafts, and exercise, swimming and entertainment activities.

**Women's resource
centres**

These provide support and education services, research materials, legal services and information on community resources. Some of them may also be sources of information on parenting and child development.

**Public health
nutritionists
and dietitians**

These professionals will give you information on nutrition and help you plan menus.

**School/Day
care centres**

From schools and day care centres you might obtain information on child development and activity ideas. Many have outdoor recreational facilities available.

**Parent and child
resource centres/
toy lending
libraries**

Special activities such as arts and crafts and story-telling. Some may have information materials on parenting and child development and a toy-lending service. These centres also offer an opportunity to meet people who are providing a day care service in their home similar to the one you are offering.

***Finding a
bargain***

Staying within a budget and, at the same time, providing the children in your care with a variety of play materials, may be made easier with a little scrounging. Visit local businesses in your neighbourhood: describe your efforts to offer children creative activities and enlist their aid. They may be helpful in letting you have an assorted collection of discards that the children can transform into works of art. Arts and craft materials, ingredients for home-made instruments and books, construction

and wood working supplies and "dress-up" clothes, such as hats and shoes can often be obtained free or for a low price.

These are examples of business you might contact.

- Butcher shops brown butcher paper
- Camera supply stores styrofoam used in packing, boxes
- Drapery and carpet companies fabric remnants and samples, spools
- Fabric stores cloth remnants, cardboard rolls
- Firms that use computers computer paper and cards
- Garages car tires, inner tubes, road maps
- Goodwill and Salvation Army thrift shops "dress-up" clothes and accessories, toys and equipment
- Leather goods manufacturers leather and suede scraps
- Lumber yards scrap wood, wood chips and shavings
- Newspapers end rolls of newsprint
- Paint/wallpaper stores sample books, remainder rolls, paint chips
- Printing shops end rolls of paper
- Restaurants stir sticks, coffee creamers, ice cream containers.
- Wool supply shops discontinued dye lots, wool ends
- Watch for sales of used library books and school furniture.

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